

DESCRIPTIONS OF FURTHER HIGHLY ORNATE
BOOMERANGS FROM NEW SOUTH WALES
AND QUEENSLAND.

By R. ETHERIDGE, JUNR., CURATOR OF THE AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM.

(PLATES II.-V.)

The boomerangs described in the present communication may be regarded as supplementary to those of an ornate nature figured in these "Proceedings,"* and the "Macleay Memorial Volume."† They are from the collections of Dr. J. C. Cox, and Messrs. P. R. Pedley and N. Hardy, and my best thanks are due to these gentlemen for the loan of the weapons.

The first five boomerangs generally resemble one of those first referred to,‡ where the incised ornament consists of loops returned on themselves, either continuous along the whole length of the weapon or disconnected one from the other.

The most highly ornate of the five (Fig. 4) bears three incised loops formed by from three to five continuous grooves, the loops gradually increasing in length. The free end of the shortest loop commences near one of the apices of the weapon, passes down the middle line for about one quarter its length, then turns to the left or concave side of the boomerang and is returned again to the apex, at this point rounding on to the convex side, which it follows to a point a trifle beyond the centre of the weapon. Here it turns to the left as far as the middle line, and is again returned in that plane until meeting with and joining the first bend, the loop curves on itself to the left and follows the concave margin throughout the remaining length of the weapon, *i. e.*, to the further apex, then returning on itself to the right, passes on to the convex margin, which it follows until coming in

* Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S. Wales, 1894, ix. (2), p. 193.

† P. 237, t. 32, f. 1-3.

‡ Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S. Wales, *l.c.*, t. 15, f. 1.

contact with the first return of the second loop, again returns on itself to the middle line of the boomerang, pursues its course along that plane, and terminates as it commenced in a free end; hence there are in this figure four turns to the left, and two to right. When there are more than three incised grooves, the additional ones are made by interpolation. Some of the interspaces of the loops are quite plain, one bears seven crosses in three and a half pairs, three others have continuous zig-zag incised lines, whilst outside the central loop on the convex side of the boomerang, the marginal space is occupied by a similar zig-zag, or almost festoon-like, figure of two incised grooves. One of the apices is similarly marked transversely, whilst the other is devoid of sculpture, but just within the return of the loop, and above the free end is a figure resembling an unsymmetrical letter W.

The length of this weapon across the curve is two feet four inches; the breadth two and a quarter inches; and the weight ten and a half ounces. It is from the collection of Mr. P. R. Pedley, and was obtained at St. George on the Balonne River, a branch of the Maranoa River, in South-east Queensland.

The second boomerang (Fig. 3) differs from Fig. 4 only in detail. The loops are identical in number and execution, but at the returning points instead of four deflections to the left and two to the right, there are two and four respectively. The interspaces are also sculptured in the same manner, although not within corresponding loops. The apices on the contrary are differently marked, both bearing a diagonal of four incised lines, the spaces on either side carrying sharp v-shaped figures.

The length is two feet four inches; the breadth two and a half inches; and the weight eleven ounces. It is from the same locality and collection as the last.

The third weapon (Fig. 2) resembles Fig. 3, except that only two loops have been incised, almost equally dividing the surface, with two deflections to the right and two to the left. Only one interspace bears a single zig-zag line, the others are devoid of sculpture. At one end the loop is contiguous to the apex, at the other the

free space beyond the return of the loops is occupied by sigmoidal figures of two incisions each, and a central gently lunate outline.

The length is two feet three and a quarter inches; the breadth two inches; and the weight nine ounces. It is from the same locality and collection as the two previous weapons.

The two succeeding boomerangs (Figs. 1 or 7) have disconnected loops, or rather half-loops placed back to back and touching in pairs. Cross bars are also present, but differ in the two weapons. In both the loops are formed of six undulating grooves, producing a figure along one margin of each weapon, then returning on itself, and proceeding along the other margin, leaving a wide space in the middle line. In Fig. 1 there are seven of these half-loops, and in Fig. 7 six. In Fig. 1 the apical half-loops are turned in opposite directions, and one is smaller than the other. That at one of the apices is cut off by a single incised transverse line, and is followed by two half loops abutting against one another, and again divided off near the middle of the weapons by another transverse incised line. Two further half-loops repeat the same order, separated by the third transverse incised line from the first large half-loop referred to as occupying one of the apical portions of the boomerang. The arrangement in Fig. 7 is practically the same, but in consequence of the penultimate apical half-loops being nearly of a size, the sculpture is almost bilaterally symmetrical. The cross-bars are only two, wide quadrangular spaces, vertically incised with close grooves. The interspaces between the two parts of each half-loop are occupied in the middle line of the weapon with a zig-zag figure of two incised lines, the angles of the zig-zag either continuous or broken. In Fig. 7 there is only one such figure, but in Fig. 1 three of the half-loops are infilled with an additional series of a single incision. Again in Fig. 7 an additional zig-zag line is represented immediately along the central convex edge of the weapon.

	FIG. 1.	FIG. 7.
Length...	... 2ft. 9in.	2ft. 6in.
Breadth	... 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ in.	2 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.
Weight	... 12oz.	12oz.

Both boomerangs are from Angeldool, on the Narran River, near the Queensland border, and are from the collection of Dr. J. C. Cox.

The next weapon to be described (Fig. 6) is well ornamented with four parallel series of small conjoined ovals, extending nearly the entire length of the boomerang, the two nearest the convex margin being the shortest. This margin is also scalloped. The ovals are obliquely incised with single grooves not all in the same direction, but the scalloped edge is plain.

The length is two feet eight inches; the breadth two and a quarter inches; and the weight thirteen ounces. It is from the same locality and collection as Figs. 1 and 7.

The original of Fig. 5 like that of Fig. 6 is a large boomerang, with the sculpture excellently done, consisting of a median line of six inequilateral rhombs, the intervening triangular spaces on each side being vertically incised with grooves. The surfaces of the rhombs are smooth, and devoid of sculpture, with the exception of the shaped nicks, in from one to four series in each rhomb, but too disjointed to assume a zig-zag pattern.

The length is two feet nine and a half inches; the breadth two and a half inches; and the weight thirteen and a half ounces. This example is also from Dr. Cox's Angeldool collection.

Fig. 8 represents a boomerang imperfect in itself, but exactly coinciding in its sculpture with one of those described by me from Norley, on the Bulloo River,* and therefore need not be described further. We have here either an example of wide distribution of a certain pattern of sculpture, or a case of a weapon passed on by barter. The specimen is again from Angeldool.

Deeply scalloped margins distinguish Fig. 12, the scalloping edged with a wide groove, and itself obliquely incised. The middle line or crown is quite smooth with the exception of a fluctuating or serpentine line of two grooves, fairly well coinciding in its fluctuations with the groove edging the scalloped figure on the

* Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S. Wales, 1894, ix. (2), t. 15, f. 2.

concave side of the weapon. The immediate apex at one end is cross-incised, and bears a few irregular v-shaped nicks.

The length is two feet three and a half inches; breadth two and a quarter inches; and the weight twelve ounces. It is from St. George, Balonne River (Mr. P. R. Pedley).

Fig. 10 is again a bilaterally unsymmetrical boomerang as regards the incised sculpture. There are three cross-bars formed of one obliquely cross-notched incised line. One of these is near the centre, another half way between this and one of the apices, and the third at the apex referred to, thus dividing the surface into three unequal lengths. The middle line bears acute small rhombs, extending throughout the two larger divisions. On each side the line of rhombs are the usual rolling or fluctuating grooves four to five on either side; whilst the middle line of the division unornamented by rhombs, is occupied by similar grooves. The apex at this end bears a transverse double zig-zag pattern, and a single similar series is intra-marginal on the convex side of the boomerang.

Length two feet three and a half inches; breadth two and a quarter inches; and the weight eleven ounces. This is a much shorter and more highly curved weapon.

St. George, Balonne River (Mr. P. R. Pedley).

The middle line of this boomerang (Fig. 11) instead of rhombs is ornamented by deeply incised rolling grooves. Flanking these are two similar grooves, intra-marginal in position, and between the latter and both edges of the weapon are a series of crosses. There are four cross-bars, one towards each apex, and one on either side the centre of the weapon. At the apices are broad semi-lunar transverse bands, both concave in the same direction, and vertically grooved.

The length is two feet four and a half inches; breadth two inches; and weight ten and a half ounces.

This boomerang is again from St. George, and in the collection of Mr. P. R. Pedley. Like Fig. 10 it is a good deal curved.

Another very bilaterally unsymmetrical boomerang is represented by Fig. 9. The principal sculpture consists of three ranges of

fluctuating grooves, four to six grooves in each range, one group in the middle line, and one on either side, extending from apex to apex, but twice interrupted by cross bars, that differ widely, however, from those figured on preceding weapons. That on one side of the centre consists of two parallel grooves, united by transverse incisions, the other near one of the apices of two such bands, somewhat separated from one another, the plain interspace carrying five v-shaped figures placed transversely. On the concave side of the boomerang, and along one part of the edge, is the ever-recurring single zig-zag line, whilst between the fluctuating lines over the general surface, either the same kind of incised sculpture or v-shaped figures parallel to the longer axis of the weapon.

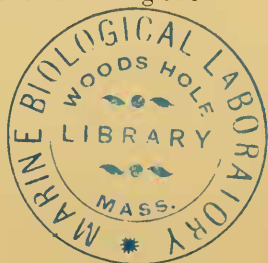
Length two feet five and a half inches; breadth two and a quarter inches; and weight twelve and a half ounces. This boomerang was received from Normanton, Gulf of Carpentaria, by Mr. N. Hardy, to whom it belongs.

A very peculiarly ornamented boomerang is represented in Fig. 13. Along the convex margin is a series of very deep scallops, reaching transversely to near the middle line of the weapon, and grooved parallel to its longer axis. The middle or centre line is occupied by a single zig-zag, and between this and the concave edge are three deep and wide slightly fluctuating lines of two grooves each. The whole produces a very marked pattern. The apices in this weapon are very sharply pointed.

Length two feet six inches; width two inches; and weight ten ounces.

From Angeldool, on the Narran River, in the collection of Dr. J. C. Cox.

The last boomerang but two (Fig. 14) bears on each side of the sculptured face long moderately deep festoons, five on either side, and obliquely grooved, but not reaching to either apex. The middle line is occupied by five large ovals, so arranged that each more or less falls into the space left between opposite re-entering angles of the festoons. These are also deeply and obliquely grooved. Clear spaces are left at both apices, one containing two



and a half rhombs placed transversely, whilst at the other is an oblong enclosure, with two parallel zig-zags of a single line each.

Length two feet five inches; breadth two and a quarter inches; and weight eleven and a half ounces.

From Angeldool, on the Narran River, in the collection of Dr. J. C. Cox.

In the last specimen but one (Fig. 15) runs a sub-central longitudinal line of eleven large ovals, and along the concave and convex margins respectively rows of fifteen and eighteen narrower ovals. Intervening between the central row and that on the convex margin at one end of the weapon is an additional row of larger ovals, but this only extends for half the length of the weapon. At each end this larger row dies off into a single zig-zag line, whilst between the sub-central line of ovals and that on the concave margin is another. All the ovals are grooved obliquely.

Length two feet four inches; breadth two and a quarter inches; and weight eleven ounces.

Again from Angeldool, on the Narran River, and in the collection of Dr. J. C. Cox.

The last boomerang (Fig. 16) is figured with some hesitation, not as to the genuineness of the weapon itself, but of the carving; the former betrays nothing out of the common. The natural objects represented are a large fish in the centre, bounded by two incised lines, and filled in with single diagonal lines in two directions, producing a series of rhombs probably representing scales. Following this, and in front of it, is a by no means bad representation of a bird; below this again four rhombs, one within the other, followed by a nondescript object, infilled with incised lines coincident with the outline; and finally at the apex a heart-shaped body. It is the execution of the bird, with the appearance of the nondescript and heart-shaped bodies that might raise the suspicion that the carving on this weapon is not purely "black-fellow." Birds, however, are by no means uncommon on the highly decorated dilly-baskets of North Australia, whilst the heart has on more than one occasion been observed amongst rock paintings, undoubtedly the work of the Aborigines. The

boomerang is the property of Mr. Norman Hardy, and is from Queensland.

Figs. 2 to 4 are obviously after the type of the ornamented boomerangs from the Bulloo River, figured by myself,* differing merely in minor details; the loop pattern is here paramount. I think it very possible also that the sculpture fore-shadowed on a boomerang from Queensland, figured by Smyth,† is only this pattern in an incomplete state. Knight figures‡ a boomerang exhibited at the Philadelphia International Exhibition, said in the same breath to be both from N.S. Wales and Victoria, and bearing those serpentine figures that are probably of the same nature.

Figs. 1 and 7.—The half-loops do not correspond to any previously published illustrations known to me. The weapon represented by Fig. 6 is to some extent allied in its pattern to another figured by Smyth,§ from Rockingham Bay, that from Comoooolaroo given by Lumholtz,|| and one of those from the Alligator River Tableland, figured by myself in the Macleay Memorial Volume,¶ except that Fig. 6 is wanting in the marginal festoon work and possesses an additional row of ovals. Fig. 15 also stands in much the same relation.

The pattern of the broken boomerang, Fig. 8, again corresponds to one from the Bulloo River.**

The remainder of the figures are not related to any published forms so far as I know. Broken zig-zag double lines, as in Figs. 1, 7, 8, 15, &c., are by no means uncommon on aboriginal weapons, whilst crosses are very uncommon (see Fig. 11). For instance a Bull-roarer, figured by Angas, from S. Australia, and called *Wimmari*, is decorated in this manner.

* Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S. Wales, 1894, ix. (2), t. 15, f. 1.

† Aborigines of Victoria, 1878, i., p. 285, f. 37.

‡ Smithsonian Ann. Report for 1879 [1880], p. 227, f. 28, lower fig.

§ Smyth, loc. cit. p. 329, f. 112.

|| Among Cannibals, 1890, p. 51, f. b.

¶ t. 32, f. 3.

** Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S. Wales, 1894, ix (2), t. 10, f. 2.

On taking a general glance over the figures of these boomerangs one is struck with the limited number of designs that appear to have been used amongst the aboriginal artists, notwithstanding that so far as detail goes no two are precisely alike. The designs are confined to the loop, half-loop, rhomb, oval, cross, rectangular bars, and semilunate, festoon, and zig-zag patterns, with modifications of one or the other. The chevron or herring pattern is also often met with. Circles and spirals are conspicuous by their absence on boomerangs. True it is the incised work of our Aborigines is devoid of that finish and delicacy of execution seen in the carvings of many other dark races—for instance, compare some of the beautiful designs employed by the Dyaks to ornament their wood work. At the same time the incised patterns of our Aborigines have a character of their own not to be mistaken for those of any other race.

Whenever natural objects are represented they are always to a greater extent recognisable as such, and do not seem to be degenerate representations of a higher and more advanced art previously existing, the realism being maintained and not abandoned. Writing on the "Decorative Art of Torres Straits," Professor A. W. Haddon says* :—"We see that the animals are always represented individually, and are not utilised for the purpose of making patterns, or of telling a story, or for conveying information." At present there is no evidence to show that figures of the animate creation were otherwise used by our Aborigines on their boomerangs.

In the majority of instances the designs run parallel to the longer axis of the boomerangs, although not in all. Etched designs appear remarkable by their absence on this class of weapon, so far as my observation goes, although they are met with on some Womerahs; neither does there seem to be that appreciation of the grotesque that forms so marked a feature in carvings from New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. One very noticeable character exists throughout the whole series, without exception, the emargination and produced centre of all the apices.

* R. Irish Acad. Cunningham Mem. 1894, No. x. p. 65.